

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 1, Slough Town 0

A GOAL just 30 seconds into the second half ended Slough Town's run of six consecutive victories over Wycombe Wanderers and kept the Blues right in the running for the Rothmans Isthmian League title in Thursday night's local derby at Loakes Park.

Victory and three points were essential to Wanderers if they were to keep up their pressure on Division One leaders Enfield and it was that motivation which brought out the fighting qualities in this Wycombe side.

Not that this was the Blues' best performance of the season. Far from it. But they kept fighting throughout the 97 minutes (there was seven minutes injury time) and a fierce spell of pressure at the start of the second half proved the deciding factor.

Slough's recent failure in the F.A. Trophy and their struggle to beat Hungerford in the County Cup seemed to take its toll on Thursday. Their re-shuffled side never really got into top gear but nevertheless they had chances to take a share of the points.

Wanderers, however, deserved this victory which puts an end to the horrific 'Slough bogey' which has been haunting them since 1975. Once again it was their back four who made the victory possible, Alan Phillips, Keith Mead and full backs Paul Birdseye and Bob Davies snuffing out the dangerous 'Rebels' front runners.

Phillips dominated Keiron Somers, Birdseye's quick-fire tackling seldom allowed Russell and Paul Lee to show their paces, while Mead and Davies looked as safe as houses.

Once again the Wycombe midfield and forwards turned in a mixed performance. For hard work none of the midfield trio could be faulted but only Mick Holifield looked to be firing on all cylinders. John Priestley kept former Wanderer Terry Reardon pretty quiet but spoilt his overall game with some poor passing while Graham Mackenzie had a similar game. Up front Dylan Evans had one of those games he will prefer to forget although he did make the deciding goal which was put away by Ian Pearson, his 39th this season.

The tension of a vital local derby was clearly evident in a

quiet first half which brought few goalmouth incidents. Roy Davies, on his day one of the best midfield players in the league, made a fine run in the ninth minute which he finished with a rising shot into the side netting but ten minutes later Priestley replied at the other end.

Pearson found Evans whose cross was cleared as far as Priestley. From some 25 yards, John sent a rocket of a shot a yard wide of the far post with goalkeeper Trevor Porter diving full length.

Slough's best effort of the half came when Gane's cross was nodded on by Lee and Terry Brown dived in to shave an upright with a brave header. Brown was later injured and had to be replaced at half-time.

Evans' inability to combine with Holifield on the left saw many promising attacks breaking down but Slough were suffering similar problems in getting round the Wycombe full backs. Lee and Russell frequently swapped wings but found no way through.

The second half provided far more excitement for the disappointingly low crowd of 1,350. From the kick-off Wanderers stormed into the lead. Holifield picked the ball up on the left and found Evans on the edge of the box. Dylan turned and hooked in a dipping shot over Porter and onto the crossbar. The ball bounced out and Pearson was there first to dive and head into the corner of the net.

RULED OUT

A minute later Pearson cut inside and drove just past the near upright and this Wycombe revival was continued in the 56th minute when Mackenzie netted what looked like a crucial second goal. Howard Kettleborough chased Evans' high through ball which Porter misjudged. Coming out of his area the keeper was forced to head the ball which fell to Mackenzie's feet. 'Jock' had a second to line up a 20 yard shot into an empty net and did the job perfectly. But Kettleborough was trapped offside by both linesman and referee Colin Downey, who ruled out the score.

A glorious run by Pearson in the 67th minute deserved a goal when he ran 40 yards beating Gane and Tim Turl and crossing the ball past Porter. Evans, however, wasted that superb preparation by slicing his shot high and wide.

During this time, Slough had been pinned back in their own half but they weathered the storm and began to look dangerous on the break. Their

tactics were simple — long high balls from defence for their speed merchants to chase. One superb 40 yard pass from Reardon, bringing back memories of his Wanderers days, sent Lee racing clear but Birdseye was back in a flash to take the ball off his toes.

A low drive from Davies was well taken by John Maskell who returned to the side for his first game for three weeks. Towards the end of the game 'Mask' must have been worried by some casual play by his defence who tried to play themselves out of trouble inside the box when the traditional boot clear looked a better bet.

LOBBED WIDE

One incident which could have robbed them of three points, was when Russell picked up a loose pass and ran clear of the defence. Maskell had to come out and the young winger, who was playing for Flackwell Heath last year and is now wanted by professional clubs, lobbed his shot just a foot past the post.

That close shave seemed to bring the best out of Wycombe who were seldom troubled in the last few minutes including an extra four in injury time. The best chance in fact, was at the other end, when Porter denied Holifield with a fine save.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; G. Mackenzie, J. Priestley, M. Holifield; I. Pearson, H. Kettleborough (sub. S. Hill 83), D. Evans.

SLOUGH: T. Porter; M. Cooper, J. Bever, T. Turl, A. Gane; R. Davies, K. Somers, T. Reardon; P. Lee, T. Brown (sub. G. Bartlett 45), D. Russell.

Referee: C. Downey (Surrey).

Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorer:** Pearson (46).

Attendance: 1,350.